

DR. KANE,

AND

Christian Heroism as seen in Arctic Voyaging :

A

DISCOURSE

PREACHED AT CANTON, MASS.,

APRIL 16, 1857.

BY

NATHAN H. CHAMBERLAIN.

BOSTON:

CROSBY, NICHOLS, AND COMPANY,

111, WASHINGTON STREET.

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Mr. NATHAN H. CHAMBERLAIN.

MY DEAR SIR, — At a meeting of the First Congregational Parish, holden by adjournment this day, it was unanimously "*Voted*, That SAMUEL B. NOYES, LYMAN KINSLEY, and GEORGE FREDERIC SUMNER, be a Committee to request a copy of the Discourse this day delivered by Mr. NATHAN H. CHAMBERLAIN, for publication."

A true copy.

Attest: SAMUEL B. NOYES,
Parish Clerk.

CANTON, April 16, 1857.
(Fast Day.)

CANTON, April 18, 1857.

Messrs. SAMUEL B. NOYES, LYMAN KINSLEY, and
GEORGE FREDERIC SUMNER.

GENTLEMEN, — The manuscript is at your disposal, as desired.

Respectfully and truly yours,

NATHAN H. CHAMBERLAIN.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON AND SON,
22, SCHOOL STREET.

DISCOURSE.

Heb. xi. 12, 13, and Rom. xiv. 7: "THEREFORE SPRANG THERE EVEN OF ONE, AND HIM AS GOOD AS DEAD, SO MANY AS THE STARS OF THE SKY IN MULTITUDE, AND AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEA-SHORE INNUMERABLE. THESE ALL DIED IN FAITH, NOT HAVING RECEIVED THE PROMISES, BUT HAVING SEEN THEM AFAR OFF, AND WERE PERSUADED OF THEM, AND EMBRACED THEM, AND CONFESSED THAT THEY WERE STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH." — "FOR NONE OF US LIVETH TO HIMSELF, AND NO MAN DIETH TO HIMSELF."

A FEW years ago, there was a funeral pageant in the streets of toiling London; and as the procession went on its mournful errand into that mausoleum of English worth, the Abbey of Westminster, a great nation looked on in the silence of a mighty sorrow: for, beneath the panoply of death, there lay the form of one who had been great among the famed commanders of the British arms; the still, calm face, that had been well-nigh as passionless, when, on distant battle-fields, the eagle-eye had caught the secret of the fight, and sent the rapid column to sweep away with its glittering steel the war-tossed battalions of a defeated foe. The life of this man had been spent in camps. He had signalized his prowess in his youth, when he

scattered with his little band the splendid squadrons of India at Assaye. His manhood had spent its strength in conflict with the armies of a skilled and victorious emperor. He had belted Portugal with his forts, and crossed swords with the imperial soldiers on the fields of Spain. At Busaco, at Salamanca, and at Vittoria, he had looked calmly down upon the surging hosts, and, with self-reliant spirit, meted out victory to his friends in silence. His life of martial leadership was crowned at Waterloo with a full success. Old age found him busied with cabinets and courts; yet in the people's reverence he was ever young. And so, when the great captain died, they carried him with sombre splendors through the Capitol, and laid him near the graves of Nelson and of Marlborough, amongst the valor, the genius, and the worth of six centuries of English life; while the touched spirit of the poet sang, —

"Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?
Here in streaming London's central roar,
Let the sound of those he wrought for,
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore."

No long time since, the "mourning of a mighty nation" for a lost leader was heard within our borders. Along the line of many cities the procession passed, and men looked on with reverent sorrow for the dead it bore. In the city of his home they laid him who had been oft a wanderer, to sleep gently amidst its din. And this man also was great. He, too, had conquered, though not with marshalled army of foot and horse, but with the trained activities of a serene and

lofty nature. . He was no skilled statesman nor soldier; yet he had that within him which might have made him great in state-craft, or sure to lead a host to battle. He was indeed a hero, of whom great things had been required; and he had answered the demand with manly deeds. Humanity had asked for him as her ally; and, obeying her in faith, he had made evident our nobility, when touched by Christian love. And so a nation bent over his lifeless body, and, weeping that so much of heaven had perished out of earth, prepared for him a kingly burial.

The story of his heroism is the history of an arctic voyage. Its motive is recorded by himself: "In the month of December, 1852, I had the honor of receiving special orders from the Secretary of the Navy to conduct an expedition to the arctic seas in search of Sir John Franklin." And he went. It is of the historic and Christian meaning of this expedition, together with the lessons contained in the leadership of its commander, that I proceed to speak.

The voyage of the brig "Advance," in which he sailed, is a fact both of religion and of race. More than nine centuries ago, the Vikings of Northern Europe sailed westward to Greenland, and explored its bays and gulfs. Several centuries later, when the ice had obliterated all traces of their arctic settlements, their English descendants followed where the fathers had led the way. With them the search was a matter of commercial interest, aided by transmitted instincts. A north-west passage to India was the declared purpose; but the Norse love of sailing on

unknown seas gave no slight impulse to their zeal. To sail round our continent by the north has been for centuries a challenge to English pride, and to her sons an act by which to win renown. Gilbert, Hudson, Parry, Ross, and Richardson found no passage, yet gained no slight honor in their search. Barenitz, Lapteff, Behring, Von Wrangel, led by the same Norse longings, have hardly less claim to our remembrance. Men have knocked at the icy gates of the North for admission; and the pitiless "Not so" has been "the cold's death-wielding strength," the rushing ice, the pathless glacier, the night and death of almost eternal frost. Yet still the voyagers sail unto the forbidden portals, and still the North holds fast her secrets. It is a problem real to the seeing mind, how far the spirit of a common courage led the Norseman and the Englishman on the same errand, or how far the Northern instinct of voyaging sent forth to sail upon a winter's sea the Pilgrims of Plymouth Rock.

Sir John Franklin received a transmitted task; and he went forth to solve the arctic problem. His final voyage was from the Thames, May 19, 1845. Twice by land, and once by sea, he had been foiled in this same attempt. In the July following, his ships were seen for the last time, moored to a berg, waiting for the moving of the far ice beyond; and, after that, there were only mystery and silence. The men of Christendom went out to search after the missing ships; and the subject of our discourse was one amongst them. You will see that he went to prosecute no common calling; we shall find that he

wrought with no common skill. In his purposes lies our warrant for mentioning his expedition. There is nothing novel in voyaging upon "the great deep." It is the ancient highway of the race. Ships of commerce have sailed upon almost every sea; and the noise of human conflict has disturbed the silence of almost every water. Phœnician, Hellenist, Carthaginian, Roman, Norseman, Italian, Spaniard, Briton, have each claimed mastery over its domain, and the oceans have been belted about with the white foam flung from the hurrying ships. Yet when the little brig of a hundred and forty-four tons, manned by a crew of eighteen men, sailed out from port, it was a novel and august sight. Others had gone forth for traffic, for rapine, and for war; these, to save a few men of a distant nation from impending death. It was a voyage of love; it was a visible confession of our Christian faith; it was a re-affirmation of that great lesson of our blessed Lord spoken so long ago, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" it was a tribute offered to the transcendent ties of our humanity; it was a deed of lofty charity for the coming ages to ponder upon and emulate.

Our victory is in its nobility, somewhat as are our enemies in their strength. The foes of an arctic explorer are neither few nor weak. The zone itself is a land of mystery. Nature herself puts on fearful robes, and surprises by her exceptional activities. Beyond the seventieth degree of northern latitude, not a tree meets the eye,—only lichens and creeping woody plants remain.

The magnetic needle, which lies horizontal at the equator, here points straight downwards; and slowly, in its cycle of nearly two thousand years, the pole of magnetic attraction revolves according to unknown laws. Two degrees further north is the pole of cold, — also a mystery. For many months the sky is dark, and the ice thickens until it becomes fixed and stable as the land. The elements seem wilder here, as if to vindicate the land from the servitude of man's presence. The cold is so intense, that iron and steel burn the hands like fire. Back, a brave explorer, says that the thermometer sank to seventy degrees below zero: "Such was the abstraction of heat, that, with eight large logs of dry wood on the fire, in a small room, I could not raise the temperature more than twelve degrees below zero. Ink and paint froze; the sextant-cases, and boxes of seasoned wood, all split; the skin of the hands became dry, and cracked and opened into unsightly and smarting gashes. After washing my face within three feet of the fire, my hair was actually clotted with ice before I had time to dry it." Yet —

"Unto the frozen land
Went out the adventurous band
To fight the Frost-king on his own bleak shore."

We must read the history of their going to understand the trials that tried these men; how, in that Northern clime, the powers of nature opposed them; how the elements encompassed them with fatal arms of death; how the sea raged, and the ice thickened, and the snow fell, and the sun sank out of sight for

months; how contrivance was thwarted by accident; how foresight proved insufficient to provide; how human strength was wasted in attempts that failed; how bread was wanting, and fuel was not found; how famine and disease came with ghastly terrors; how the strong man laid down despairingly, and died; and then how human nature rose up against all this, and, asserting its own supremacy, bore back the remnant of wearied men to the fair havens of the South. Are not the "Arctic Explorations" a Christian "Iliad"? and is not our Achilles nobler than Thetis' son? The leader of this expedition was indeed the wise man, the king; and his gentleness was but equalled by his strength. He met the foremost of the foe; he did his part of the common labors of the crew; he shunned no danger; and, while the weight of a great responsibility rested upon him, he was free and cheerful. This commander is generous and just. After he has frankly stated that his officers and men sympathized but little with this continued effort to force a way to the North, he quickly adds, lest he may be unfair, "It is unjust for a commander to measure his subordinates, in such exigencies, by his own standard. The interest which they feel in an undertaking is of a different nature from his own. With him, there are always personal motives, apart from official duty, to stimulate effort. He receives, if successful, too large a share of the credit; and he justly bears all the odium of failure."

This man also has a heart open to that nature which God inhabits; and can find time, amid his per-

plexity, to scan the meaning of the stars. He says, "The intense beauty of the arctic firmament can hardly be imagined. It looked close above our heads, with its stars magnified in glory, and the very planets twinkling so much as to baffle the observations of the astronomer. I have trodden the deck when the life of earth seemed suspended, — its movements, its sounds, its coloring, its companionships; and as I looked on the radiant hemisphere circling above me, as if rendering worship to the unseen Centre of light, I have ejaculated, in humility of spirit, 'Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?' And then I have thought of the kindly world we had left, with its revolving sunlight and shadow, and the other stars that gladden it in their changes, and the hearts that warmed to us there, till I lost myself in memories of those who are not, and they bore me back to the stars again."

He had faith in God, when faith meant something and cost much. He will do this or that, God willing, he often says; and the company kneel down daily in the arctic darkness, while their leader repeats their trusting prayer, "Lord, accept our gratitude, and bless our undertaking." He says, "Call it fatalism, as you ignorantly may: there is that in the story of every eventful life which teaches the inefficiency of human means, and the present control of a supreme Agency. See how often relief has come, at the moment of extremity, in forms strangely unsought, almost at the time unwelcome! See, still more, how the back has been strengthened to its increasing bur-

den, and the heart cheered, by some conscious influence of an unseen Power!" There is something supremely touching in his musings at a time when human cunning seemed to fail, and his own fate to be uncertain. Far off in the dim twilight of the early spring rose up a ridge of mountains, beyond which lay the Northern Sea; and he longed to pass beyond them, in his search for Franklin. "I do not know," he says, "what preposterous working of the brain led me to compare this north-western ridge to Bunyan's Delectable Mountains. Once upon your coasts, O inaccessible mountains! I would reach the Northern Ocean, and gather together the remnants of poor Franklin's company. These would be to me the orchards and vineyards and running fountains. The 'Lord of the hill would see in me a pilgrim.' I did try to gain these summits; and when I think of poor Baker's and Pierre's death, of my own almost fatalistic anxiety to cross the frozen sea, and of the terrible physical trial by which we saved our advance party, I cannot help dwelling, as something curious in its likeness, on another scene which Bunyan's explorers witnessed amongst the Delectable Mountains. 'They hied them first to the top of a hill called Error, which was very steep on the farthest side. So Christian and Hopeful looked down, and saw at the bottom several men, dashed all to pieces by a fall which they had from the top. Then said the shepherds, "More than you see lie dashed to pieces at the bottom of this mountain, and have continued to this day unburied, for an example to others to take heed how they

clamber too high, or how they come too near to the brink of this mountain.””

The conclusion of the expedition is too well known to need explicit narration. Most of us remember how the frail bark was left far northward, among the everlasting ice; how the survivors trusted themselves to the frozen sea; and how they came finally to the place of succor. But the leader was sick and weary. Home, with its dear charities, would not suffice; and so the sufferer sought health in foreign travel. But no: not that shall help; and so, weak and faint, the traveller halts finally among the green islands of the sunny South. He had stood face to face with Death many times in his arctic voyage, and had not quailed before the enemy; and now he does not fear. The grim ruler had long since devoted him for sacrifice, — had bound in silence his chains about the sufferer; and now openly he came to claim his own. Alas that Heroism and Manliness should sink before the tyrant! The powers of the North had launched their shafts with faultless aim; and the stricken one was dying of his wounds, cheered by the friendly climate of the South. A brave and manly readiness, and the worn one passes through the dark portals. He has taken his last voyage, into the serene sanctities of that other life, “where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest;” and, as the pale form lay fanned by the soft winds, far off in the icy North there lay another deserted hulk, bound in the deathful ice; and, in the sunless air, the mad waves still broke; the ice-drift still hurried on its

way; the Frost-king still held his court unhindered; the land of ice still lay silent in its fearful gloom; and still far up above shone the unconscious stars; and over all was the conscious God of the North and of the South.

The value of the arctic expeditions of the last two centuries lies in their spiritual import. It is doubtful whether a north-west passage to India will ever become available to commerce; and the cost of the attempts made cannot be sanctioned by any merely material returns: yet are they investments which Christendom has made, from which the race will draw large revenue. The very fact of such labor is much. Men fit together the wood and iron, and build a ship. Science foresees, and arms the voyagers against the powers of nature. Thus equipped, they sail boldly forth into the North; and the grim forces of the Frost, with all their terrors, cannot drive back the feeble ones whom Mind has rendered strong. Herein lies a prophetic answer as to the whither of this century's intense activities. Science climbs slowly its lofty heights; and it is to lift us up nearer the perfect law of life. Mechanics create stores of novel and wondrous material fabrics; and they are but to spiritually enrich the race; for the world is Christ's, and not Mammon's. This labor points to life, and not to death. The factory's smoke, the forge's clamor, the many voices of our modern industries, do but foretell that millennial time when Science and Work, in their acquired perfection, shall bow before the Cross of their allegiance, and, as the helpers of

our common needs, lift up the race nearer to Christ and God. Humanity sought from skill aid to recover her imprisoned children; and the response was an arctic fleet, rich with the cunning craft of uncounted ages. An expedition furnished like Franklin's is only possible for the present century. It is the ultimatum of man's Now, prophetic as to the things to come. It is the index which marks on the horologe of humanity the Present of our eternal progress.

Apart from the advancement of science (a purpose common to all the voyagers), the sailing of the searchers for Sir John Franklin has been prompted by an eminently Christian idea. It is the verdict of Christendom as to the worth of our humanity, and a declaration as to its belief in human brotherhood; and its on-look is towards a universal peace. It is the response which the church of the nineteenth century makes to the revelation of the first. The heartless formula of any creed of antiquity would have been, "Let alone." If a weak woman had asked an Egyptian Pharaoh for help to save her husband, the despot, who could lavish myriads of men upon his pyramids, would have answered the nothingless slave with "Nay." Had she petitioned the Hellenist, who held to his ancestral myths, to send succor to the sailor, shipwrecked on the shores of the savage Chersonese, what to him was any stranger of a race that were the puppets of the gods? Had she asked aid of the cultured philosophy of Greece, the Platonist would have turned away to discuss some new Socratic question, the Epicurean to seek some more

luxurious ease, the Stoic to wonder why the unfortunate could not bear her sorrow in silence and be happy. Had a Roman matron sought from the Senate succor for some Latine mariner, stranded upon the treacherous shores of Syrtes, what was he to them who could send legions to die on every plain, from the Pyrenees to the Euphrates, in the service of a God whose sacrifice was human life?

Christ must come before the philanthropic seamen could go forth to help; the babe of Bethlehem must lie cradled on its virgin mother's breast before the arctic explorations of these last seven years could be. It was because that little bark was launched upon the sea of life, doomed to be tossed with tempests which should render pure the air we breathe, that the ships of succor went forth to wrestle with the icebergs of the North, and demand back the prisoners its frozen chains did hold. The search for Franklin was the centuries' profession of Christ.

The arctic zone has proved, in God's providence, the modern battle-field of heroes. I doubt whether, in any campaign of Bonaparte, there can be found more examples of brave endurance, and that not uncommon physical courage which does not quail before impending death, than were exhibited in the cruises of such men as Back and McClure. I am certain that no courage on battle-fields can rise to such nobility as these men showed on the ice-fields over which they journeyed. Their narratives exhibit an amount of human nobleness that may well serve as surety against the impeachment of our humanity

as base. One thinks better of his race when having read them. In a time of famine, a woman had caught a fish. The Esquimaux would not taste of it, lest the white men should not have sufficient for themselves. "We are used to starving," they said; "but you are not." When the same people heard of the death of Bellot, a gallant seaman, who, two years before, had set the broken leg of one of them, they wept, and cried, "Poor Bellot!" When the lives of Back's company depended on the fidelity of their hunter, the savage faithfully gave up all his game, and said, "The great chief trusts in us; and it is better that ten Indians perish, than that one white man should perish through our negligence, and breach of faith." The dying Barenitz asked to be lifted up, that he might see a Northern cape as they were sailing by; and then full soon the shattered ship was stranded on the gloomy shores of death. Franklin left a dying wife to sail; and the stout-hearted man was yet so gentle, that he would never kill an insect which troubled him, saying, "the world was wide enough for both." When Sir Humphrey Gilbert, on his arctic expedition, was advised to shift from his over-loaded vessel to one larger, he said, "I will not now desert my little vessel and crew, after we have encountered so many perils and storms together;" and he was last seen in the stern of his foundering bark, calling to his crew, "Courage, my lads! we are as near heaven at sea as on land."

What especially surprises one is the reverent faith of these men. They are stout and brave; yet they

ask God's help, and are not ashamed to trust in him. They stand face to face with his mighty works, and so perceive their littleness. A towering iceberg, or a furious drift of ice, put to flight all self-sufficiency. They are alone with God and his creation, and so confide in his protection. A shipwrecked crew throw themselves on their knees on reaching land, and pray. Hudson calls islands that had sheltered him, "Isles of God's mercy." Another calls a place "God-send Ledge;" and a sled he builds, "Faith." McClure, the discoverer of the north-west passage, writes, "Can it be that so humble a creature as I am will be permitted to perform what has baffled the talented and the wise for hundreds of years? But all praise be ascribed unto Him who hath conducted us so far in safety."

The lesson of our subject is one of Christian heroism. Courage of some sort there always was, for the human heart is framed for lofty deeds; but the heroism that denies self for God and man came in with Christ. The fortitude of battle-fields has been often manifest. The warrior's sword has been ever honored by the historian's pen. Poets have sung untired the perpetual praises of a Patriotism that kept the guarded pass for Liberty, and, sending back brief oath of fealty to Lacedæmon, lay down and died. But our example was when the great Leader put back the ready sword of service into its scabbard, and, asking for no angelic hosts to succor him, went forth from Pilate's judgment-hall to die upon the cross for us.

To save the race from its destroyers has been for nineteen centuries the mission of the Christian hero ; and for this the martyrs of the church have died ; for this has slavery been hemmed in with liberty ; for this have brave men gone forth to visit prisons, weak women to tend the wounded in distant camps ; for this went forth the searchers for the lost voyagers in arctic seas. The little brig "Advance" sailed forth from port, intrusted with its freight of human life, and that still more precious mission, which, transmitted from the hands of Him who so divinely wrought in the Bethesda porches, has enriched all lofty action to help a suffering and restrained humanity. The world cannot afford to lose such heroes. It clings to them to be its declaration of its own intents and estimates. The hero is the surety of man, as the universe is of God. The creative power of such is measureless. Their influence is as subtile and as pervading as are the elements of God. They cannot divest themselves of their strength, more than the sun of his light. They are exemplars, after which all true men pattern ; they are enduring facts, that make way for the coming of the kingdom ; they are the everlasting hills of hope, on whose peaks rests the celestial light, foretelling of the blessed sun beyond.

God made the world as a wide theatre for acted heroisms. The universe is for the brave in Christ, not for the menial followers of Satan. A mean nature exists only by requirements of man's free agency. God's earth is for the heroes ; and, were there none,

the sun should not give his light. When the unheroic rules, the universe is chained to failure; but, when the noblemen of God prevail, then is the song of morning constellations a hymn of victory, then are the swinging censers of the stars the lights of an ordained success, then is the universe of the Creator happy in its accomplished purpose.

The hero whose deeds have been the main subject of this discourse found not the lost ones; yet he did not fail. The icy portals of the North refused him entrance; but the portals of the coming ages open to let the story of his endurance echo on beneath the long reach of the arches of the great time-temple; and, because memory is, because the soul is, because God is, the recollection of this man shall remain for ever as one of the great army of the martyred heroes who have "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

In the beginning of this discourse, we spoke of the great captain who lies buried in Westminster Abbey. Of our great leader, as of that heroic band of voyagers he represents, let it be said, —

"Peace! his triumph will be sung
By some yet unmoulded tongue,
Far on in summers that we shall not see.
For though the giant ages heave the hill,
And break the shore, and evermore
Make and break, and work their will;
Though worlds on worlds in myriad myriads roll
Round us, each with different powers,
And other forms of life than ours, —
What know we greater than the soul?"

On God and godlike men we build our trust.
 Hush! the dead-march wails in the people's ears;
 The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs and tears;
 The black earth yawns; the mortal disappears:
 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust!'
 He is gone who seemed so great.

Gone! but nothing can bereave him
 Of the force he made his own,
 Being here; and we believe him
 Something far advanced in state,
 And that he wears a truer crown
 Than any wreath that man can weave him.
 But speak no more of his renown;
 Lay your earthly fancies down,
 And in the world's cathedral leave him:
 God accept him, Christ receive him!"